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SUBJECT: CHAD/SUDAN: FRENCH IDEAS ON POSSIBLE WAY FORWARD

REF: SWAN-KANEDA E-MAIL (2/13)

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d
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[11](#). (C) SUMMARY: French Presidential AF-advisor Romain Serman on February 14 sketched out possible next steps concerning Chad and Sudan jointly to acting Africa Watcher and UK Emboff. Serman prioritized stabilizing Chad, promoting reconciliation between Deby and the rebels, improving Chad-Sudan relations by ending support to both sides' rebel groups, and implementing a series of steps, starting at the regional level, progressing to the AU and then to the UN, to curtail Sudan's negative influence in the region. He suggested careful coordination among interested countries and identifying appropriate roles that each could play as this process develops. Regarding the tactical situation on the ground in Chad, Serman described friction between the Nouri and Erdimi factions, with the latter possibly ready to cease fighting. He added that the French media tended to look at France's engagement in Chad largely as a means of finding ways to criticize President Sarkozy. Serman (PROTECT) also confided that the Presidency was not happy with Foreign Minister Kouchner, who, in the Presidency's view, had alarmed EU partners through his recent pleas that they should carry out EUFOR's deployment. Serman said that Kouchner's entreaties seemed only to have increased European anxiety about sending troops to Chad and the Central African Republic (C.A.R.); Serman believed France would be better off not saying much and letting the EU's earlier decision to deploy stand without further comment. Serman was keenly interested in feedback from the UK and U.S. on next steps in the region. We reported that much of Serman's analysis seemed to coincide with Washington's preliminary thinking. UK Emboff Joyce said that London's biggest present concern was avoiding the appearance that the only priority was preserving Deby's regime. END SUMMARY.

[12](#). (C) Romain Serman, one of two working-level AF-advisors at the French Presidency (reporting to Deputy Diplomatic Advisor and Senior AF-advisor Bruno Joubert), on February 14 invited UK Paris Emboff Lucy Joyce and acting Africa Watcher to discuss the Chad/Sudan/Darfur cluster of issues. Serman said that he had been given full authority to devise next steps for the region and wanted to share the results of his brainstorming. He remarked that whatever plan he developed would likely be adopted as policy, given President Sarkozy's delegation to him of this responsibility and his readiness to heed his experts' advice concerning less familiar issues such as Africa.

Chad and Sudan

[13](#). (C) Serman said that the international community needed to continue working to stabilize Deby, allow him to

reconstruct his government, and encourage the rebuilding of Chad's infrastructure so as to make a rebel victory impossible, if the rebels were not otherwise persuaded to cease trying to overthrow Deby. France had done "the right thing" in supporting Chad's legitimately elected government. In the short term, EUFOR needed to deploy and Chad needed to return to the principles of the August 13, 2007, political accord. Some means had to be found to promote reconciliation between the government and rebels, which could include opening the political process. Serman explained that this was one reason the GOF was calling on the government to explain its treatment of opposition figures in detention.

¶4. (C) Concerning Sudan, UNAMID's deployment was crucial, as was a resumption of the political dialogue within Sudan. Sudan needed to be convinced that it could not continue to support Chadian rebels. Serman stressed that Sudan must be made to understand that it could not defeat the "Chad-France coalition," as he put it, and pressure needed to be placed on Sudan so as to allow Deby to consolidate his government and to allow EUFOR's deployment before the next rainy season.

¶5. (C) Serman said that it was very obvious that Sudan was supporting the rebels in a major way, which was tantamount to an open war with Chad. He said that France had clear proof of this, including evidence of Sudanese orders to the rebels as to how they should conduct their most recent offensive, evidence that could be used at some point as leverage against Sudan. Both sides had to stop supporting the other's rebel groups and the proxy wars they were carrying out for N'Djamena and Khartoum. Just as Sudan was supporting Nouri, Erdimi, and the other Chadian rebels, Chad had to stop supporting JEM and the Sudanese/Darfur rebel elements. In short, Serman said that both Chad and Sudan had to stop their "internal wars" and stop the "proxy war" between the two countries.

¶6. (C) Leveling most of his criticism at Sudan, Serman said that Khartoum must cease and desist and stop supporting the Chadian rebels. France's presence in Chad had served as an effective deterrent, while the recent UNSC Presidential Statement condemning rebel actions had allowed France to bluff the rebels into thinking twice about resuming their offensive, on the assumption France had obtained sufficient international support to use force against them if necessary. Serman said that the GOF had adroitly used press leaks and vague public pronouncements to suggest that it would take military action against the Sudan-backed rebels. He admitted that this had largely been for show, but believed that it had been effective in causing Sudan and the rebels to think again about pressing the offensive.

How to Effectuate?

¶7. (C) Serman envisioned a series of sequential initiatives bilaterally and multilaterally at different levels that would keep pressure on both Chad and Sudan, encourage a cessation of rebel activities, and foster stability in the region. As a first step, he suggested, France, Libya, Europe, and the U.S., in various combinations, could broker meetings between Chad and Sudan. He thought that a regional summit meeting, perhaps of CEEAC countries, could be a useful next step that could at least produce a statement calling for the establishment of a political framework applicable to Chad, Sudan, the C.A.R., and the region more generally. A declaration by the AU could then follow, leading to action by the UN Security Council. The objective would be to create a network of international constraints that would inhibit Sudanese adventurism in the region. This, along with the deployments of EUFOR and UNAMID, would at the same time allow for progress in Darfur.

¶8. (C) There were other tools available to pressure Sudan, Serman noted. Acknowledging that the U.S. "has its own views on the International Criminal Court," Serman said that the threat of ICC involvement in Sudan and prosecution of individual Sudanese for their crimes in Darfur could also be

used to encourage compliant Sudanese behavior. Sudan should also be told flatly that it could not pick and choose with respect to UNAMID participants.

¶9. (C) Serman said that what he had presented was a first cut at developing a larger, more elaborate set of actions that could be taken to address the region's problems. UK Emboff Joyce and acting Africa Watcher said that their capitals would be interested in exploring these ideas further with France. Acting Africa Watcher referred to (but did not provide a copy of) notional USG thinking contained in ref e-mail, stating that the USG, at least at this preliminary stage, had objectives similar to those that Serman had described. UK Emboff Joyce said that London's main concern at present was to avoid giving the impression that the principal objective would be to prop up the Deby regime as a means of reinforcing French influence in the region. Serman said that that was not France's objective. It wanted to support Deby to avoid the greater evil that would come with a rebel victory, and at the same time address Chad's problems, the Chad-Sudan problem, the problems caused by Sudan more broadly in the region, and the Darfur problem. He welcomed any feedback London and Washington could provide.

Rebels Seem Divided

¶10. (C) In addition to his presentation on ways to move forward, Serman also gave an update on the situation on the ground. The principal rebel groups (the Nouri and Erdimi factions) had gathered near Ade in eastern Chad. Nouri's faction apparently wanted to continue to fight, whereas Erdimi's did not, and seemed prepared to make a deal with the government. The two groups were squabbling, Serman reported, with both sides wanting to claim all of the supplies coming from Sudan. Moreover, ethnic friction between the factions was increasing, with Nouri's Goran supporters at odds with Erdimi's Zaghawa. Serman reported that Nouri's group had destroyed a Zaghawa village, causing a further deterioration in their relations. On the other hand, Deby had re-armed and re-equipped his forces, using weapons and supplies coming "from everywhere." Serman reported that Libya continued its support to Deby, largely because the Libyans feared that his fall would lead to Sudan's de facto control of Chad, which would make Sudanese incursions into the C.A.R. more likely. If Sudan controlled Chad and the C.A.R., it would have a powerful influence over northern Nigeria and its Muslim population. Libya could not tolerate this, Serman believed, and thus continued to support Deby.

Chad Is a Vehicle to Criticize Sarkozy

¶11. (C) Serman said that the Chad/Sudan/Darfur crisis was taking place during a period when Sarkozy was under intense scrutiny because of his private life and other recent political missteps. The press, Serman asserted, was looking at Sarkozy's policy through an excessively negative and critical prism, only seizing upon elements tending to show Sarkozy's incompetence or lack of judgment. The press emphasized France's supposed support of the dictator Deby without giving much thought to what a rebel victory would mean ("a compliant satellite Sudanese state resembling Somalia"). Similarly, for many, Chad represented only the Zoe's Ark incident (the child-smuggling episode) and the need for Sarkozy to intervene on the smugglers' behalf. Serman said that Zoe's Ark was a non-issue in geo-political terms, although he acknowledged that the GOF had forwarded the convicts' request for a pardon to Deby.

Chad Has Frightened Europeans and Kouchner Isn't Helping

¶12. (C) Serman said that many Europeans were also misinterpreting events in Chad, their most notable concern being that France's engagement there had compromised Europe's "neutrality," thus jeopardizing EUFOR's chances for success. Serman said that this view was misplaced. France had come to the assistance of the legitimate government of Chad, had not engaged in combat on the regime's behalf, and was working to prevent a greater tragedy (victory by the rebels). EUFOR's

deployment should continue forthwith, he said. Speaking with extreme bluntness, Serman (PROTECT) said that the French presidency was not happy with FM Kouchner, who had been phoning European counterparts to encourage EUFOR's deployment. Serman said that this served only to heighten European anxieties, as they were interpreting Kouchner's call as a sign that there was some new and unknown danger that they had to overcome. Serman said this was counterproductive -- having made its decision, the EU should carry out EUFOR's deployment without further ado. He indicated that the Presidency would reign Kouchner in so as not to increase European worries and to avoid giving credence to perceptions that France was trying to "manipulate" European partners for France's own purposes.

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